

'Touched by an Angel' Star Della Reese Lett Dead at 86

Touched by an Angel star Della Reese has died, co-star Roma Downey says.

"On behalf of her husband, Franklin Lett, and all her friends and family, I share with you the news that our beloved Della Reese has passed away peacefully at her California home last evening surrounded by love. She was an incredible wife, mother, grandmother, friend and pastor, as well as an award-winning actress and singer. Through her life and work she touched and inspired the lives of millions of people," her co-star Roma Downey confirmed to *PEOPLE* in an exclusive statement.

"She was a mother to me and I had the privilege of working with her side by side for so many years on *Touched by an Angel*. I know heaven has a brand-new angel this day. Della Reese will be forever in our hearts. Rest In Peace, sweet angel. We love you."

In addition to her acting, Lett was an American nightclub, jazz, gospel and pop singer. She founded the Understanding Principles for Better Living Church.

Her congregation was part of "New Thought Christianity," a philosophy that dates to the 1800s and emphasizes the teachings of Jesus, practical principles of a liberal form of Christianity and an openness to metaphysics and other philosophical thought, according to the *Religion News Service*.

"I love God," Lett said in 1996. "I love Jesus. I love the truth. I love peace, joy and happiness, and my ministry gives me all that."

Of her church, Lett says:

Understanding Principles for Better Living Church (UP Church) started in my living room as a small group of eight Christians seeking to gain more divine knowledge of how to bring about change in their lives. Using the Holy Bible as our inspiration and the Rev. Dr. Johnnie Colemon as our guide, we studied, read and prayed. Soon we were too big for my home, and we started moving to larger facilities. The benefit of those moves has provided us with a wonderful cross-section of people who have benefited from our teaching ministry.

We teach to fill that spiritual hunger of those who are unhappy with the way they are living their lives, and need to reacquaint themselves with God's principles for achieving the Good Life, which is the God Promised Life.

At UP Church, we do not attempt to teach you what to think, but rather how to think on a higher level. And that level of thinking will immune you from the doubt and fear that causes us not to see the best in ourselves and others; immune you from magnifying our mistakes; immune you from procrastination, and immune you from failure.

Immunizing yourself from negative thinking and actions allows the God qualities of confidence, diligence, compassion, forgiveness and most importantly Love to fill your life. This is how we achieve a healthy spiritual outlook ... eliminate the negative and hold on to the positive.

A daily prayer to help you do this is, "God promised me that I am whole, perfect and complete. I believe it!"